

## Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/AFN:WSWEISLOGEL:MP  
APPROVED BY P:PHABIB  
NEA:ALATHERTON, JR.

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P 290044Z JUL 76  
FM SECSTATE WASHDC  
TO AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY  
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS:PFOR, TS, US, LY

SUBJECT: UNDER SECRETARY HABIB'S MEETING WITH TUNISIAN  
AMBASSADOR HEDDA, JULY 27, 1976

1. UNDER SECRETARY HABIB MET WITH AMBASSADOR HEDDA ON  
JULY 27, 1976 AT 3:00 PM.
2. HEDDA DESCRIBED TUNISIAN/LIBYAN SITUATION AS NOT VERY  
FAVORABLE. REFERRING TO MEETING BETWEEN CHATTI AND MULCAHY  
ON JULY 22 HE REMARKED THAT US INFORMATION ABOUT LIBYAN  
INTENTIONS COINCIDES WITH THAT OF GOT. BECAUSE OF FAILURE  
IN SUDAN QADHAFI IN FRUSTRATION WILL TURN HIS ATTENTION  
ELSEWHERE QUOTE LIKE A WOUNDED LION END QUOTE AND TUNISIA  
IS LIKELY TARGET. HE SAID QADHAFI IS RECRUITING THOUSANDS  
OF MERCENARIES ON THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET AND TNDGOT  
FEARS HE IS PLANNING TERRORIST ACT BETWEEN NOW AND  
3 AUGUST, PROBABLY COMMANDO OPERATION, TO COINCIDE WITH  
PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S VISIT TO SOUSSE AND MONASTIR IN  
CONNECTION WITH ANNUAL FETE AND BOURGUIBA'S BIRTHDAY.

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3. HEDDA SAID HE VISITED SENATORS PERCY AND HUMPHREY PRIOR TO COMING TO DEPT AND WAS ENCOURAGED BY THEIR FAVORABLE ATTITUDE TOWARD TUNISIA. THE FRENCH ALSO HAVE EVIDENCED SYMPATHY AND CHIRAC RECEIVED GOT AMBASSADOR IN PARIS TO DISCUSS GOT CONCERNS. THE EGYPTIANS ARE SENDING TWO SUBMARINES AND TWO SURFACE WARSHIPS DESPITE THEIR OWN PREOCCUPATION WITH LIBYA. HEDDA RECALLED MEETING BETWEEN BOURGUIBA, JR. AND SECRETARY IN WHICH LATTER STATED US WOULD NOT PERMIT ANYTHING TO MENACE LIBERTY AND INTEGRITY OF TUNISIA. GOT URGENTLY NEEDS DIPLOMATIC ACTS OF DIS- SUASION BY ITS FRIENDS TO SHOW THE LIBYANS THAT TUNISIA IS NOT ALONE. GOT ALSO REQUIRES FROM US SPARE PARTS, TOW MISSILES AND LIGHT MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND HOPES THAT IF ANY FMS FUNDS REMAIN AT END OF YEAR GOT NEEDS WILL BE REMEM- BERED. HE SAID \$5 MILLION FROM LAST YEAR'S FMS WOULD BE USED FOR COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT FOR WHICH HE URGED ACCELERATED DELIVERY.

4. HEDDA SUGGESTED PUBLIC DECLARATION BY PRESIDENT FORD OR SECRETARY REAFFIRMING SUPPORT OF US FOR TUNISIA AND SPECIFICALLY SUGGESTED AN APPROPRIATE MESSAGE BE SENT BY PRESIDENT FORD ON OCCASION OF BOURGUIBA'S BIRTHDAY. HEDDA MADE PITCH FOR AUGMENTED FMS ALLOCATION IN FY-77 INSTEAD OF SPACING EQUAL TRANCHES OVER FOUR YEARS, ALTHOUGH HE ACKNOWLEDGED LEGISLATIVE/FISCAL PROBLEMS.

5. MR. HABIB BEGAN HIS REMARKS BY NOTING THAT AS RESULT OF JULY 22 TUNIS CONVERSATION DEPT HAD TAKEN CERTAIN ACTIONS: (A) AT OUR REQUEST CURRENT VISIT OF USN VESSELS TO TUNIS WILL BE EXTENDED. WE ARE LOOKING INTO POSSIBILITY OF INCREASING FREQUENCY USN SHIP VISITS ALTHOUGH THIS DEPENDS ON OTHER MISSIONS OF FLEET IN MEDITERRANEAN. (B) WE ARE EXPLORING WAYS OF ASSISTING TUNISIAN INTELLIGENCE TO KEEP ABREAST OF WHAT IS GOING ON IN TUNISIA/LIBYAN BORDER AREA. (C) WE ARE LOOKING INTO EXPEDITING MILITARY ITEMS ALREADY ORDERED, ALTHOUGH THIS IS NOT EASY BECAUSE OF LONG PRODUC- TION LEAD-TIMES. HABIB PROMISED WE WOULD TRY TO SECURE ADDITIONAL FMS FUNDING FOR IMMEDIATE MILITARY PURCHASES, NOTING THAT WE ALREADY ARE WORKING ON THIS PROBLEM. HABIB URGED GOT TO SEND ASAP HIGH LEVEL MILITARY MISSION WITH  
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POWER MAKE DECISIONS AND COMMITMENTS TO DISCUSS TOW MISSILES AND OTHER URGENTLY NEEDED MATERIEL.

6. HEDDA INTERRUPTED HABIB PRESENTATION TO RETURN TO GOT FEAR OF LIBYAN MOVE WHICH HE CLAIMED IS JUSTIFIED BY HARD EVIDENCE FROM INTERIOR MINISTRY. ONE HOPEFUL SIGN IN OTHERWISE DISMAL SCENE IS THAT LIBYAN AND TUNISIAN MIN- ISTERS OF INTERIOR ARE PLANNING ANOTHER MEETING SOON. IN

RESPONSE HABIB'S QUERIES RE MEETINGS, HEDDA SAID MINISTERS HAD MET BEFORE. HE DID NOT KNOW YET WHERE SECOND MEETING WOULD TAKE PLACE BUT THOUGHT IT WOULD BE AT END OF THIS WEEK.

7. RESUMING HIS PRESENTATION, HABIB PROMISED TAKE MATTER OF PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE UNDER ADVISEMENT AND LET HEDDA KNOW. HABIB THEN MENTIONED THAT FRANCE HAD APPROACHED US ABOUT TRANSFERRING MINESWEEPER TO GOT ON LOAN. HE EXPLAINED THAT VESSEL HAD BEEN ACQUIRED FROM US UNDER MAP AND ITS TRANSFER COMPLICATED BY RED-TAPE INVOLVING LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS FOR CONGRESSIONAL NOTIFICATION. HOWEVER, WE WILL TRY TO CUT THE RED-TAPE. HABIB CONCLUDED WITH OBSERVATION THAT GOT AND EGYPT HAVE COMMON PROBLEM WITH REGARD TO LIBYA EXCEPT THAT EGYPT IS EVEN MORE LIKELY TARGET. HABIB AGREED WITH HEDDA THAT TUNISIA PERHAPS EASIER TARGET AND THEREFORE MORE SUSCEPTIBLE.

8. HEDDA EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR PAST AND PRESENT US ECONOMIC AID BUT INSISTED GOT HAS NEED OF GREATER ASSISTANCE IN CONNECTION WITH NEW DEVELOPMENT PLAN. HE NOTED HE HAD DISCUSSED THIS WITH SENATOR PERCY WHO ASSURED HIM US CONGRESS SYMPATHETIC TO TUNISIA. HE REPORTED THAT MERRILL-LYNCH HAS DECIDED ESTABLISH ITS MID-EAST HEADQUARTERS IN TUNISIA AND THAT OTHER IMPORTANT US FIRMS ARE MOVING IN. HE REGARDED THIS AS VANGARD OF INCREASED US INVESTMENT AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY AND SAID TUNISIA WANTS TO BUY AMERICAN. UNFORTUNATELY EXIM CREDITS CANNOT MATCH GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT FINANCING OF MANY COMPETITOR COUNTRIES. HE HOPED WE COULD INCREASE AID LOANS FOR HEAVY EQUIPMENT WHICH WOULD STIMULATE MORE PRIVATE PURCHASES AND INVESTMENTS. HABIB EXPLAINED THAT LONG-TERM LOW INTEREST RATE CREDITS ARE LIMITED NOW BY LEGISLATION AND NOT SUBJECT TO STATE SECRET

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DEPARTMENT DECISIONS. HEDDA REPLIED THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED THIS WITH SENATOR HUMPHREY WHO HAD SAID HE (HEDDA) COULD ASSURE HABIB REGARDING SYMPATHY OF CONGRESS FOR TUNISIA.

9. RESPONDING TO HABIB'S CONCLUDING QUERY WHETHER THERE WERE OTHER ITEMS TO RAISE, ATHERTON URGED HEDDA TO GET GOT MILITARY MISSION HERE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, EVEN BEFORE MID-AUGUST, IF FEASIBLE. HEDDA SAID HE WAS PROCEEDING TO PENTAGON FOR MEETING WITH NOYES RIGHT AFTER HIS MEETING WITH HABIB AND WOULD DISCUSS THIS.

10. FINALLY HEDDA REQUESTED VERY BRIEF APPOINTMENT FOR MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY WHICH COULD BE PUBLICIZED AS EVIDENCE OF USG SUPPORT FOR TUNISIA. HE WOULD ALSO PLAN TO DELIVER A LETTER TO THE SECRETARY FROM HABIB BOURGUIBA, JR.

MR. HABIB SAID HE WOULD TRY TO ARRANGE SUCH A MEETING, AND  
WOULD MEANWHILE PREPARE REPORT BRIEFING THE SECRETARY ON  
TUNISIA'S CONCERN. KISSINGER

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